

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Fall 2001

The full Commission meets together ten times a year (meetings are usually not held in July or August). The Monthly Commissioner Meetings are generally held on the fourth Wednesday of the month. See below for specific dates and times.

October 3, 4-7 p.m. **Public Hearing.** YWCA of Central Massachusetts, One Salem Square, Worcester. Come talk to Commissioners about your concerns. Participation is free, refreshments will be served, and translation will be available. Contact the Commission office to register and for more information.

October 24, 4-6 p.m. **Monthly Commissioner Meeting.** The Hurley Building, 19 Staniford St. Rm. 307, Boston. Call the Commission Office for more information or log onto our website for directions to the Hurley Building.

November **Public Hearing in Brockton.** Date and location to be determined. Check our online calendar listing for more information.

November 28, 4-6 p.m. **Monthly Commissioner Meeting.** The Hurley Building, 19 Staniford St. Rm. 307, Boston. Call the Commission Office for more information or log onto our website for directions to the Hurley Building.

Check our website for October's Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities. www.state.ma.us/women

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

The Charles F. Hurley Building
19 Staniford Street, 6th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02114



The Update

FALL 2001

A NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN



**Letter from
the Chair,
SUSANA
SEGAT**

I am pleased to announce that this legislative season the Commission has endorsed three pieces of legislation that are of importance to women and girls. We hope to see all three bills move favorably through the legislature. Read more about those bills in this issue of *The Update*. Please help us by writing to your State Representative and Senator to encourage them to support these important pieces of legislation.

This fall MCSW continues our successful series of public hearings. Commissioners will be in Worcester in October and Brockton in November to listen to testimony. Please tell your friends in the Worcester and Brockton areas to come to the hearing and testify.

Also, don't forget to visit our "Innovative Programs" section on the website. We are looking for local, state, or federal government programs that innovatively support women and girls. Please let us know about government programs that should be featured on our site.

Finally, on behalf of the full Commission, I want to congratulate Berkshire County and the City of Taunton for their activities in establishing a women's commission in their area. Our goal is to promote and help develop local women's commissions in Massachusetts.



**Letter from the
Executive Director,
PRISCILLA
GOLDING**

After holding six public hearings around the state and reviewing our survey results, the Commission chose two priority issues: child care and violence against women. This spring the Commissioners and staff began exciting discussions with representatives of the child care and anti-violence communities. Our admiration for their work and dedication continues to grow as we learn more

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about the struggles faced by women, their families, and the advocates who work to make their lives safe and secure. The frustrations and barriers facing advocates and the communities they serve are both awe-inspiring and extremely daunting.

The Commission's goal is to positively add to the struggle for quality care for our children and freedom from violence for all of us. Our Commission's Task Forces will be moving ahead with projects during the next year in conjunction with the activities of government agencies, community organizations, and labor unions.

Commissioners

Susana Segat, Chair
Roseanna Means, Vice-Chair
Barbara Gomes-Beach, Secretary
Minosca Alcántara, Treasurer
Kathleen A. Casavant
Donna Finneran
Marianne Fleckner
Mary Ann Glendon
Elaine Guiney
Mary Clare Higgins
Frances X. Hogan
Susan K. Howards
Helen Jackson
Sandra Jesse
Mary Reardon Johnson
Angela Menino
Jo Anne Thompson
Gwendolyn Tyre
Kateri Walsh

Staff

Priscilla Golding, Executive Director
Heidi Kruckenberg, Program Coordinator

Summer Interns

Phoebe Lovejoy, Wheaton College
Alicia Mitchell, Johns Hopkins University
Pam Mutascio, Simmons College

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

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MCSW's Priority Issues: Violence Against Women and Child Care

Task Force on Violence Against Women

—*Report from Task Force Co-Chair Roseanna Means, M.D.*

The Task Force on Violence Against Women was recently created within the Commission to study this issue. Our first action was to convene a roundtable of experts and advocates from throughout the Commonwealth. Forty people attended this first roundtable on May 17, 2001. The discussion centered on the broad topics of violence against women and girls, its many repercussions, and what services are both available and out of reach. A priority list of actions that MCSW could perform to better understand the broad and complex financial and societal costs of violence against women was created. Among several items, MCSW committed to coordinate a study of the economic costs of violence against women when all the service needs are met and when they are unmet. Roundtable participants will be included in the study design and process.

Task Force on Child Care

—*Report from Task Force Co-Chair Kathleen A. Casavant*

On June 20, 2001, a roundtable discussion sponsored by MCSW was held with various members of the child care community. Discussion addressed the complexity of the issue and how MCSW could help highlight the needs and concerns of child care providers, agencies, and parents. Much of the discussion centered on the problem of employee turnover within the child care system, the lack of resources available for further education of these workers, and the need for higher wages and better benefits. It was decided that MCSW's Task Force on Child Care would pursue the subject of the need for workforce development and education of child care workers. Additionally, MCSW will endorse a one-day conference to be held on October 1, 2001, at IBEW 103 in Dorchester that will bring together researchers, children's advocates, and labor around the issues of child care and paid family leave. The conference is sponsored by UMASS Amherst and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. Commissioner Mary Clare Higgins and I are both very excited about the work of the Task Force on Child Care and believe that the Commission can help highlight this very important subject.

Executive Director Priscilla Golding and I met with Ardith Wierworka, Commissioner of the State Office of Child Care Services on June 16, 2001, to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current child care system in Massachusetts.

Helping to Create More Commissions for Women

The Commission wants to help communities all over the Commonwealth form local commissions for women.

We have met with groups in Taunton and in the Berkshires who are interested in creating commissions; we hope to meet with groups in other places, as well. The group working on a Berkshire commission meets under the auspices of the Task Force to Establish a Commission on the Status of Women in the Berkshires. The Task Force is a project of a course entitled *Status of Women/Berkshire County*, developed by Professor Betty Kendall at Mass College of Liberal Arts in North Adams. The project consists of two teams. One team meets at General Electric, Pittsfield, and the other meets at MCLA, North Adams. The objective of the Task Force is to identify areas of needed change, to develop a change strategy with assistance from MCSW, and to put a program into operation which will re-establish a Commission on the Status of Women in the Berkshires. A public hearing was held on August 1, 2001, at Berkshire Community College.

It is MCSW's goal to encourage and help develop women's commissions in every section of the Commonwealth, and these two areas have taken up our challenge. We will let you know as soon as the new Berkshire County and Taunton Commissions are established . . . and you should let us know if you would like some help in setting up a Commission in your city or town. We are here to help!

This fall MCSW will be collaborating with existing women's commissions to create an information packet entitled "How to Create a Commission for Women in Your Community."

Our Website Is Growing

Visit MCSW's website at www.state.ma.us/women today!

- New page about our legislative work
- Links to state and federal government sites focusing on women's and girls' issues
- Six newly-updated hotline pages containing information on child care and children's resources; community action agencies; food, clothing, and housing assistance resources; health/medical assistance resources; legal services; and sexual assault and domestic violence resources
- New page about innovative government programs

Public Hearings

The Commission hosted two successful public hearings since our last issue of the newsletter. In March we collaborated with the Greater Boston Girls' Coalition, the Boston Women's Commission, the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women, and Somerville Commission for Women to hold a public hearing on girls' issues at Roxbury Community College. Over 200 people attended the hearing and many of the 75 participants who testified were girls or teenagers. Our May 9 hearing at Cape Cod Community College was well-attended with over 60 participants. Over 30 people testified on issues as broad in range as violence against women, health care, insurance, and education.



At left: Commissioners (l-r) Marianne Fleckner, Roseanna Means, and Minocsa Alcántara heard testimony at the hearing on Cape Cod.

Below: Commissioners listen to testimony at Cape Cod Community College in May.



Two upcoming hearings are scheduled for Fall 2001. The first will be in Worcester. The Commissioners will be in Brockton in November. Come tell the Commissioners about the issues you think are important to women and girls in Massachusetts. More information, including directions, is available on our website at www.state.ma.us/women. Visit the "Hearings" section of the website to view photos, survey results, and hearing reports.

LOOK FOR OUR NEW LOGO

Together with graphic artist Bonnie Katz, the Commission is working to create a logo that represents our mission and work. Look for it on our website and printed materials soon.

LEGISLATIVE ENDORSEMENTS

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women voted to endorse three pieces of state legislation thus far in 2001.

Each of the three bills is consistent with our mission. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

The first bill MCSW endorsed was S.804 *An Act to Prohibit Discrimination in Insurance Policies*. Considering that present law does not conform to the Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment, the Commission feels that it is important to act now to support gender equity in



insurance policies. Any form of discrimination in the insurance industry allowed to go unchallenged would be a step back in the lives of women statewide. This is an issue of fairness and equity.

The second endorsed bill was S.97/H.2651 *An Act to Ensure Eligibility for Unemployment Insurance for Victims of Domestic Violence*. Violence against women was the issue most frequently raised at public hearings through testimony and surveys and we believe that this issue is of critical importance to the Commonwealth. This bill would assure an employee affected by domestic violence the economic security she needs to assist her in securing a safe and stable living situation. Additionally, it would give an employee the support she needs in obtaining suitable employment in the future.

The third bill was S.141/H.2836 *An Act to Establish a Self-Sufficiency Standard in Massachusetts*. This Self-Sufficiency Standard will calculate realistic costs of housing, food, child care, transportation, medical care, taxes, and miscellaneous costs by region within the state. It will establish a realistic independent benchmark of economic status; an actual cost of living in the various regions of the Commonwealth. It may be used as an official and accurate reference point for policymakers when developing and evaluating workforce training and education programs.

Our Legislative Subcommittee oversees the Commission's endorsement of legislation. When making decisions on endorsement, the Legislative Subcommittee carefully examines both sides of a bill and also looks to the testimonies presented at public hearings. It is MCSW's goal to eventually write and/or sponsor our own legislation.



The audience at the public hearing on girls' issues in March, held at Roxbury Community College.